

# HAIL PREVENTION RITUALS AND RITUAL PRACTITIONERS IN NORTHEAST AMDO

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## ABSTRACT

Hail prevention rituals and *ser srung* 'hail prevention ritual practitioners' in Skya rgya Village (Gcan tsha County, Rma lho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon Province) are described. The origins and history of the *ser srung* are discussed and their ritual implements and practices are detailed. Tibetan texts related to *ser srung* are provided with English translations.

## KEYWORDS

*gdams pa*, hail, hail prevention, *sde brgyad*, *ser srung*, *ser tho*

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Hail prevention has a history of several centuries in Skya rgya (Jiajia), a community located in Gcan tsha (Jianzha) County, Rma lho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Mtsho sngon (Qinghai) Province. The village is divided into seven hamlets: Ru 'og ma, Pha gzhi, Bar rtsig, Gle ring, Yang gle, A 'byung, and Gnam steng. The first five hamlets belong to Kha stod 'Upper Skya rgya', and the latter two to Kha smad 'Lower Skya rgya'. The village had approximately 430 households in 2010. All residents were Tibetan.

Hail prevention ritual practitioners known as *ser srung* were traditionally much respected locally and people paid *ser 'bru* 'hail prevention tax' for their services. In 2012, however, there were no *ser srung* in Skya rgya, though their ritual implements and texts remained, as well as memories of *ser srung* ritual activity.

Villagers' perspectives on the causes of hail, the origins and history of Skya rgya *ser srung*, and the ritual implements used by *ser srung* (with photographs of each) are presented. The characteristics, capabilities, skills, and qualities of *ser srung* are described. Hail prevention rituals and the practice of *ser srung* collecting hail prevention tax are also detailed.

This article is based on fieldwork, interviews with local elders, and the collection and analysis of folklore and traditional songs. The text also includes information summarized from the Buddhist scripture, *The Pavilion in the Stirred Mirror of Instruction: Preventing Hail through the Secret Sādhana of Hayagrīva*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I thank Blo brtan rdo rje, Gerald Roche, Timothy Thurston, Daniel Berounský, and CK Stuart for assistance in the preparation of this article. Any remaining mistakes are my own.

<sup>2</sup> *Rta mgrin gsang sgrub kyi sgo nas ser ba srung ba'i gdam pa me long 'khrug pa'i gur khang*, hereafter abbreviated as *Preventing Hail*. This text and most of the other Tibetan texts used in this paper are extracted from *Rta mgrin chos 'khor* composed by Lcang skya rol ba'i rdo rje (1717-1786), and obtained from Gsang sgrog Monastery.

## HAIL AND ITS CAUSES IN SKYA RGYA

According to a local account, the mountain deity, Mgon po brag nag, causes hail in Skya rgya Village.

Four great mountains inhabited by mountain deities surround Skya rgya Village. A ye Klu sman is in the east; Mgon po brag nag is in the north; A myes Srin po is in the west; and A myes Brag dkar is in the south.

Once, A myes Srin po and Brag dkar both wanted to marry A ye Klu sman, which caused them to quarrel. Finally, A myes Srin po married A ye Klu sman and gave her a fox fur hat. Brag dkar was angered by this and struck A myes Srin po's head with a stick. A myes Srin po retaliated by scratching Brag dkar's head. Later, to avoid surprise attacks by Brag dkar, A myes Srin po turned to face him, which is why, today, A myes Srin po has two peaks facing Brag dkar.

Since then, Mgon po brag nag has been very jealous of A myes Srin po's marriage and harasses him by sending hail to the village. However, whenever he is about to send hail, A ye Klu sman notices and puts on her hat to warn A myes Srin po.<sup>3</sup>

Such mountain deities are called *gzhi bdag*. According to village elders, local mountain deities send hail against each other when the villages they protect have conflicts. Locals consider hail to be a weapon used by the *sde brgyad*<sup>4</sup> 'the eight classes of deities and spirits', to fight with each other. Villagers believe that these invisible

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<sup>3</sup> This account is a synthesis of what I heard numerous times from various community members.

<sup>4</sup> Formally written *lha srin sde brgyad*, the composition of the *sde brgyad* varies, with one common description being devas (*lha*), nāgas (*klu*), yakshas (*gnod sbyin*), gandharvas (*dri za*), asuras (*lha ma yin*), garuḍas (*nam kha' lding*), kinnaras (*mi 'am ci*), and mahoragas (*lto 'phye chen po*) (THL online dictionary: <http://dictionary.thlib.org>, accessed 6 May 2012).

spirits both help and harm individuals and communities. These spirits assist people who take refuge in them and who honor them with prayers and offerings. When poorly treated, they may become furious and cause disasters such as diseases, drought, and hailstorms. Villagers also believe that the *sde brgyad* need to eat, and they harvest grain by sending hail to destroy crops in village fields. This belief is further substantiated by villagers sometimes finding wheat husks in the rifts of mountains where deities are believed to dwell.

In order to protect village crops, *Skya rgya ser srung* are thought to wage war with the *sde brgyad*. *Ser srung* rely on their *gdams pa* (instructions), mantras, and meditative visualizations of deities to stop hail and protect village farmlands.

#### ORIGINS OF SER SRUNG IN SKYA RGYA

Village *ser srung* typically belonged to the Mo gzu Household.<sup>5</sup> *Skya rgya* village elders said there were no designated *ser srung* before the Mo gzu Household settled in the village. Instead, the position of *ser srung* rotated annually among village *sngags pa*.<sup>6</sup>

The first *ser srung*, Mo gzu, was brought from Ska phug<sup>7</sup> Village by Pandita<sup>8</sup> 'Jam dbyangs dbang phyug around 1740 to Bar rtsig Hamlet, as this was 'Jam dbyangs dbang phyug's birthplace and he wanted Mo gzu to be *Skya rgya's ser srung*. Mo gzu Household members are considered direct descendants of Sakya Pandita<sup>9</sup> and

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<sup>5</sup> Most households are referred to by the name of the male household head, which changes from generation to generation. Households that have had a *bla ma*, other respected religious practitioners, or leaders are referred to by adding *tshang* 'household' after the dignitary's name or title, sometimes followed by their village name. This name is used for that household in perpetuity, but not for descendants of that household who establish new households.

<sup>6</sup> *Sngags pa* are household tantric practitioners of the Rnying ma pa sect.

<sup>7</sup> A village about thirty kilometers from *Skya rgya*.

<sup>8</sup> Great scholar.

<sup>9</sup> Sakya Pandita (1182-1251) was one of the Five Sakya forefathers and exercised political power over Tibetans on behalf of the Mongols. He is also

also to be of the *ser srung* lineage and *gdams pa*.

Most villagers do not remember the name of the second *ser srung* (b. ~1760), but recall that his son was named Chos dar. When the second *ser srung* was young, the Mo gzu Household and the Ma nang a lags Household's relatives quarreled. Later, a relative of the Ma nang a lags Household was murdered by a Mo gzu Household member. An indemnity was subsequently levied against the Mo gzu Household, who also lost their right to prevent hail. The monk, Ma nang a lags, who was locally famous for having attained meditative realization of 'Jigs byed<sup>10</sup> and being able to harness the deity's energies, subsequently assumed the role of *ser srung* in Skya rgya. Locals claim that Ma nang a lags's practice of 'Jigs byed was so advanced that he had a horn just like the deity's. However, despite adeptly practicing tantra, mantra, and meditation, he was unable to prevent hail from striking Skya rgya. As heavy hail fell one day, Ma nang a lags saw Chos dar (b. ~1780), the son of the previous *ser srung*. He picked the child up, and the hail immediately ceased. He then realized that even though he successfully practiced 'Jigs byed, he lacked the *ser srung* lineage, and then returned the right to prevent hail to the Mo gzu Household and to Chos dar's father.

Chos dar became the third Skya rgya Mo gzu Household *ser srung*. His father taught him to read and write Tibetan, and to recite tantra and mantra. He inherited all the mantra his father knew. Elders say he was very studious and diligently practiced mantra, especially those of Gsang bdag<sup>11</sup> and Rta mgrin.<sup>12</sup> Because Chos dar often directed hail to fall on Gle zhol Hamlet in Do rgya Village,

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known as Sa pan (THL online dictionary: <http://dictionary.thlib.org>, accessed 6 May 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Vajrabhairava, a form of Yamāntaka, the wrathful form of Mañjuśrī, serves as a meditational deity in Tibetan esoteric Buddhism. He also serves as a dharma protector.

<sup>11</sup> Guhyapati Vajrapāṇi, in a trinity with Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī representing power, compassion, and wisdom of all Buddhas. He is considered to be one of the most powerful dharma protectors in Tibet.

<sup>12</sup> Hayagrīva.

villagers there asked him to protect their crops by conducting hail prevention rituals for them, and paid *ser 'bru* 'hail tax' to him for this service.

The fourth Skya rgya *ser srung*, Shag kya (b. ~1840) was a direct descendant of the previous *ser srung*, and was also adept at Tibetan chess. One summer, several young village men were doubtful about Shag kya's ability to prevent hail, went to his house as dark clouds approached the village, and began a chess game with Shag kya, who concentrated on playing. After a short while, the storm broke over the village. Shag kya realized this, worried that hail would destroy the village's crops, took out his ritual implements, climbed onto his roof, sat cross-legged, held his palms together in front of his nose, and began meditating on the deity Bya rgyal khyung.<sup>13</sup>

Hail began falling heavily around him and his house. The young village men laughed and said, "See, Shag kya, there is so much hail here. You prevented nothing."

Shag kya answered confidently and calmly, "Don't worry. I meditated on Bya rgyal khyung. Its wings will prevent hail from falling on all our farmland, except in outlying areas." The young villagers did not believe him and went to the fields to check. When they arrived, they were amazed to see that though hail had fallen at the edges of the field, none had fallen on the crops. Shag kya's fame then spread. After Shag kya died, all villagers mourned his death.

The fifth Skya rgya *ser srung*, Bla ma tshe ring (b. ~1890), was a member of the Mo gzu Household and the son of the previous *ser srung*. He rarely practiced tantra, mantra, or meditation and frequently sought income by mending clothes and shoes, wandering to nearby villages and lingering there. He was not recognized as a good *ser srung*. Soon after the famine and widespread destruction of 1958, his wife died and his daughter married and moved into another household. He then took his son and went to Mang ra Village, Mang ra (Guinan) County.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> A large, mythical bird often described as the king of birds – the garuḍa.

<sup>14</sup> Mang ra is both the Tibetan name of Guinan County and the name of a

Bsam gtan rgya mtsho (~1925-1990) was the sixth and last Skya rgya *ser srung*. Unlike former *ser srung*, he was not a direct descendant of the previous *ser srung*. He was initially a monk in Gsang sgrog<sup>15</sup> Monastery, where he meditated on the deity Gsang bdag, chanting his mantra numerous times. Monks in Gsang sgrog said he chanted Gsang bdag's mantra one hundred million times and thus obtained unique powers. Bsam gtan rgya mtsho became a farmer and married during the Cultural Revolution. When Bsang sgrog Monastery was rebuilt in 1980, he was unable to resume being a monk for he already had a wife, but he did become the Skya rgya *ser srung*. However, he was not considered a competent *ser srung* because disastrous hailstorms destroyed many crops even when Bsam gtan rgya mtsho conducted hail prevention rituals. However, he was known for curing villagers' (especially children's) skin diseases by blowing on them and for being able to communicate with birds. Bsam gtan rgya mtsho had a short temper and was angered if, for example, a village or household gave insufficient *ser 'bru*, which explains why he practiced hail prevention rituals only intermittently, sometimes stopping for several years.

The role of *ser srung* disappeared from Skya rgya after Bsam gtan rgya mtsho died.

#### SER SRUNG CHARACTERISTICS AND IMPLEMENTS

*Ser srung* must possess three qualities to successfully prevent hail: *gdams pa'i rgyud pa* (lineage), *bsnyen pa* (meditative realization), and *sgrub pa* (empowerment). Each is introduced below.

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specific village in Guinan County.

<sup>15</sup> A monastery in Skya rgya.

*Gdams pa'i rgyud pa*

*Gdams pa* refers to the teaching, instructions, or advice concerning a secret doctrine, *rgyud pa* refers to lineage, and *gdams pa'i brgyud pa*, therefore, refers to the lineage teachings of a secret doctrine. *Gdams pa* may only be transmitted after the potential recipient has been tested to determine if he is a suitable candidate, by comparing him to a 'vessel'. Three types of vessels cannot receive *gdams pa*: a broken vessel, or one with holes, connotes someone who is forgetful; an inverse vessel indicates an individual who does not listen to others; and a vessel with poison symbolizes someone who will cause harm if given *gdams pa*.

Dreams and divination were used to identify the type of 'vessel' a person was. A candidate was examined three times over a period lasting between a few months and many years. *Skya rgya ser srung* typically bestowed their *gdams pa* on a son or other close male relative. The following quotes attest to the importance that locals place on a *ser srung*'s lineage.

*Skya rgya ser srung* had *gdams pa'i rgyud pa*. Therefore, they must have been useful. Most people believe the sky is vast and people are small, and that people can't affect the sky, but that's not the truth.<sup>16</sup>

I strongly believe *ser srung* were useful, but not since *Bla ma tshe ring*. *Bsam gtan rgya mtsho* was not a good *ser srung*, even though he chanted the hail-preventing mantra one hundred million times. Actually he wasn't a member of the *Mo gzu* Household and didn't have the lineage of a *ser srung*.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Rgya gar (b. 1949).

<sup>17</sup> Mgon po rgyal (b. 1946).



*Bsnyen pa*

A *ser srung*, whether a monk, tantric practitioner, or lay person, must practice *bsnyen pa*, which entails meditating on a deity, chanting the deity's mantra, praying to them, and making offerings, often in seclusion in a closed room. These actions enable the practitioner to accumulate the deity's power, which manifests itself in *rtags* 'signs', including the ability to make a plant wither or heal a wound with one's breath. *Preventing Hail* states that there are three types of signs: the manifestation of the deity before the practitioner, dreams of the deity transporting the practitioner somewhere or talking to him, and a solar or lunar eclipse occurring during meditation. Locals also believe that the appearance of rainbows during meditation is a sign of a *ser srung*'s meditative attainment. *Ser srung* who reach this level are able to prevent hail.

*Sgrub pa*

*Sgrub pa* refers to the empowerment of ritual implements used by *ser srung*, including *chu phyang* 'raincoat', *rwa dung* 'conch', 'ur cha 'sling', and *ser rde'u* 'hail pills'. Each is described below. A *ser srung* empowers his ritual implements before hail prevention rituals.



FIGURE 1. *Chu phyng* 'raincoat'.

This *chu phyng* is made of durable yak hair felt, and kept a *ser srung* warm and dry during rain or hail. This *chu phyng* is said to have been taken from Sakya Pandita's family.



FIGURE 2. *Rwa dung* 'conch'.

The *rwa dung* features a metal mouthpiece to avoid abrasion and contains a mantra written on paper. The *rwa dung* is considered powerful because it has been empowered by many generations of *ser srung*, and its sound is said to be painful to the eight classes of deities and spirits. It also has a long history of unknown duration according to elders.



FIGURE 3. '*Ur cha* 'sling'.

Herders typically use yak-hair slings. This sling is unique in that it contains human skin, a ball of widow's hair, and *ser rde'u* (see below) that have been empowered with chanting. The *ser rde'u* and widow's hair are from Sakya Pandita's family. The plaiting of the rope changes direction from clockwise to counterclockwise nine times.



FIGURE 4. *Ser rde'u*, pills kept in a small fabric bag.

The small pills were often white mustard seeds. The larger pills are said to contain soil from a destroyed castle wall, ash of burned copper, water and soil from a spring inhabited by *nāga* (*klu*), the water of melted hail that has damaged crops, soil taken after a flood, soil from the site of a lightning strike, ash of burned musk deer and mad dog canine teeth, soil of a place where people have been killed, soil from a crossroads, and the flesh of a brown bear. Additionally, each of the larger *ser rde'u* contains a repelling mantra<sup>18</sup> written on a tiny piece of paper with a mixture of ink, blood, and poison. The larger *ser rde'u* are also from Sakya Pandita's family.

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<sup>18</sup> *Zlog sngags*.



FIGURE 5. This was previously inside a *ser 'khor*, a prayer wheel used by *ser srung*.

This mantra paper was once inside a *ser 'khor* 'prayer wheel' used by *ser srung*. The prayer wheel was subsequently lost or destroyed. It is said that during Bsam gtan rgya mtsho's time, he put this paper into a small iron box that he swung on a rope towards hail clouds.





FIGURE 6. *Ga'u* and *rdo rje*.

The deity depicted in the *ga'u* is Gsang bdag. Meditating on Gsang bdag and reciting his mantra are considered efficacious in preventing hail. The *rdo rje* (see below) tied on the silk strip is considered efficacious in protecting the *ser srung* and in defeating his enemies.



FIGURE 7. This *thang ka* was hung in the place where the *ser srung* empowered his ritual implements.





FIGURE 8 AND 9. *Da ru*, *dril bu*, and *rdo rje*.

The first picture shows *Da ru* and the second, a *dril bu* (left) and *rdo rje* (right). These implements were used in rituals empowering other ritual implements and substances.

*Preventing Hail* states that implements must be empowered to protect the *ser srung* from lightning strike, *mnan pa* 'suppression' must be performed, and other ritual implements must be empowered.

Items that protect the *ser srung* during the ritual were empowered first. To do this, the *ser srung* made 1,000 three-sided daggers using *skyer ba*.<sup>19</sup> Each had a mantra written on it and the *ser srung* empowered it by blowing on it. Similarly, he also made small rectangular battens on which his deity was drawn and then he blew on them. The small daggers were used to construct a box that was then wrapped in a bolt of yellow silk.

The implements used to defeat the eight classes of gods and spirits were empowered next. *Dug rdzas* 'poisonous substance' prepared from horse and donkey hair, musk, black saffron, pig fat, black dog feces, and the flesh of snakes and frogs, was used to empower the '*ur cha* and *ser rde'u*.

A ritual called *mnan pa* was also performed. A triangular wooden box was made and a piece of paper soaked in poison, featuring an outline of a deity that may harm the community, was placed inside. The deity was depicted with a thin body bound by an iron chain, with blood coming from its mouth and nose. The *ser srung* then chanted a mantra to entice the deity into the triangular box. If he successfully suppressed the deity, the outline on the paper appeared lifelike. He next dug a triangular hole at the edge of farmland where hail commonly fell and buried the box. A small stupa of soil clods, called *ser tho*, was built over the filled-in hole. After chanting scriptures about the *khro bo bcu*<sup>20</sup> the *ser tho* was thought to be possessed by one of these deities. The *ser tho* then protected

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<sup>19</sup> *Skyer ba* 'barberry' is a thorny plant with a yellow, bitter inner layer used in Tibetan medicine, and tiny, very sour seeds. Two types of barberry grow in Skya rgya: *skyer dkar* (*Berberis jamesiana* Forrest & W. W. Sm.) and *skyer nag* (*Berberis tsarica* Ahrendt). The former are white and *skyer nag* is darker. *Skyer ba* is especially flexible and was historically used to make bows.

<sup>20</sup> The Ten Wrathful Ones (THL online dictionary: <http://dictionary.thlib.org>, accessed 6 May 2012).

cropland from hail.

The process of suppression described above is complex and difficult. For convenience, Skya rgya *ser srung* often simply set up a *ser tho* and painted it white without burying anything under it. A *ser srung* might also have used a piece of wood covered by long, coiled grass. Among the grass was a piece of paper inscribed with a mantra and 'Skya rgya yul phyogs 'di yi lo tog dang rtsi shing mi dang srog chags tshang ma la gnod pa mi byed cig Don't harm the crops, plants, people, or animals in the land of Skya rgya'. This was stuck in the ground as a *ser tho* on Ser tho Hill, above the village. After the *ser tho* was set up, Kha stod villagers, including both men and women, came to a small hill beside Ser tho Hill and offered *bsang* and for seven days chanted a crop protection scripture such as Gdugs dkar, Ma ri tsi, or the mantra of Rta mgrin. The Shing lu'u Household<sup>21</sup> in Bar rtsig was responsible for giving a male goat when the ritual was held. This type of *ser tho* was usually built in Skya rgya because it required none of the hard-to-obtain substances required for other methods.

#### SER SRUNG REGULATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

According to *Preventing Hail*, *ser srung* must abide by the following nine regulations:

1. Trust and believe in the *gdams pa* as the substantive and fundamental quality of a *ser srung*. Be self-confident, and doubt neither the *gdams pa* nor himself.
2. Have wrathful eyes and abundant offering substances when facing hail.
3. *Rdzongs pa* 'offerings' to the eight classes of deities and spirits are

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<sup>21</sup> There are two Shing lu'u households, one in Pha gzhi and the other in Bar rtsig.

important.

4. Concentrate completely when practicing mantra.
5. Be able to successfully conduct fortunetelling.
6. Be able to locate the direction of the eight classes of deities and spirits.
7. A *ser srung*'s capability to distinguish appropriate and inappropriate days is important, as this determines a ritual's efficacy.
8. Be able to prevent hail of the eight classes of deities and spirits.
9. Be able to protect themselves against lightning strikes. Being a *ser srung* is dangerous because of the possibility of being struck by lightning. Several methods may prevent this, including drawing a five-pointed star, with every point containing a mantra syllable.



FIGURE 10. The five-pointed star in *Preventing Hail*.

*Ser srung* in Skya rgya also had the *ser 'khor* that was spun in a counterclockwise direction to protect the *ser srung* from being struck by lightning.

To maintain his power, a *ser srung* did not steal, cheat, lie, or smoke; eat garlic, onion, or meat; drink liquor; and did not slaughter cattle, sheep, or pigs from the eleventh day of the second lunar month to the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month. He furthermore abstained from sexual intercourse, did not sleep during the day, and avoided places where conflicts, especially between women, occurred.

He carefully ensured that his *srung ma*<sup>22</sup> was not contaminated by negative energies from wearing or passing beneath others' clothing. He did not sew or touch needles during this time, maintained good relationships with *bla ma*, and avoided contact with widows.

During the seventh lunar month, *ser srung* often stayed on Skya nag Hill at a tantric hall and accumulated power by chanting mantra. While there he ate bread, butter, *rtsam pa*, and yogurt and drank milk tea. He occasionally might have returned home.

*Ser srung* also managed the Chos 'khur<sup>23</sup> 'Carrying Scriptures' ritual, held twice a year during the third and seventh lunar months. The first time was after sowing the fields and the second was a month before the harvest. During the ritual, Kha stod villagers circumambulated their farmlands in a clockwise direction led by a person carrying the *Brgyad stong pa*.<sup>24</sup> Villagers followed in two groups, with men in front and women behind. The *ser srung* was last and carried his *ser 'khor* in his left hand and held a stick in his right hand, which he used to beat those who violated rules, such as chatting while circumambulating.

While carrying such scriptures as *Bka' 'gyur*, *Bstan 'gyur*, and *Brgyad stong pa*, villagers chanted *oM ma ni pad me h+UM*. Both men and women sang the mantra twice in turn. The scriptures they carried were borrowed from Gsang sgrog Monastery by the *ser srung*, who paid part of his *ser 'bru* to the monastery as a fee for using the scriptures.

Chos 'khur started after a *bsang* offering on Rin chen chos gling Hill to the north of Skya rgya. During the two breaks while circumambulating, all villagers ate bread and drank tea, men wrestled, and women chatted and watched the men while sitting along the field borders. The circumambulation circuit was

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<sup>22</sup> Family protector or guardian deity.

<sup>23</sup> This ritual is also referred to as Chos 'khor in certain other Tibetan communities.

<sup>24</sup> *Prajñāpāramitā* in 8,000 verses.

approximately twenty kilometers long and a whole day was spent in walking it.

This ritual was held to avoid drought and hail and to ensure a good harvest. With the permission of *ser srung*, Kha smad villagers also held the ritual by themselves – Kha stod and Kha smad could not finish circumambulating all Skya rgya farmland in a single day. The *ser srung* was not involved in the ritual in Kha smad.

On the fifteenth day of the sixth lunar month, the *ser srung* managed the Dbyar ston 'Summer Festival', which was held for two days to enable the *ser srung* to successfully prevent hail. During the festival, the Skya rgya Village leader gave a speech defining Skya rgya's territory, and villagers held horse races and shooting competitions, and sang. In order to successfully prevent hail, all *sngags pa* from Rogs ma, Bar rtsig, Pha gzhi, Gle ring, and Yang gle hamlets, gathered in a tent to chant the Khyung scripture. They held a *lab tse*<sup>25</sup> ritual to request A myes Srin po to protect village croplands from the four elemental disasters,<sup>26</sup> especially hail. During that day, almost all the men and boys from each village household went to Nyin ri Hill. When all had gathered, they made a *bsang* offering by burning juniper branches sprinkled with *rtsam pa*. At the same time, they planted large arrows in a cairn and threw *rlung rta* 'wind horses' to the sky.

During Dbyar ston, Gsang sgrog Monastery gave a sheep and one long arrow for the *lab tse*. Local people gathered at Nyin ri Hill and some young men were arranged to slaughter the sheep. The sheepskin was put on a wooden cross so that it faced the tent where the *sngags pa* chanted Khyung. When they finished chanting, *ser srung* took away the sheepskin. The arrow given by the monastery was placed in the center of the *lab tse*, surrounded by smaller arrows from hamlets or households.

Folk songs related to hail and *ser srung* were sung antiphonally especially during Dbyar ston. The songs in Tibetan

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<sup>25</sup> Long poles resembling arrows are upended in a heap of stones.

<sup>26</sup> Flooding, storms, hailstorms, and earthquakes.

script, Wylie transliteration, and English translation follow.

### Song One

ཞིང་བ།  
¹དགུང་སྟོན་པོ་འདྲ་བའི་གནས་ཁང་ཞིག།  
²འབྲུག་པོ་ཁྱུང་འདྲ་བའི་མགྲོན་པོ་ཞིག།  
³ཆར་ཟེལ་མ་འདྲ་བའི་བསུ་མ་ཞིག།  
⁴ངས་ཡང་ཡང་བསུ་བའི་སྟོན་ལམ་འདྲེབས།།

Zhing ba/

¹Dgung sngon po 'dra ba'i gnas khang zhig/  
²'brug pho chung 'dra ba'i mgon po zhig/  
³Char zil ma 'dra ba'i bsu ma zhig/  
⁴Ngas yang yang bsu ba'i smon lam 'debs//

Farmer:

¹A blue sky-like dwelling,  
²A fine dragon-like guest,  
³A soft rain-like greeting,  
⁴I pray that there may be such greetings again and again!

### Song Two

ཤེར་སྟུང་།  
¹དགུང་ཨ་སྟོན་དབྱིངས་ལ་འཇའ་གསུམ་ཤར།།  
²སྟུན་ཤར་མ་གཉིས་ཀྱི་གདན་ཟིག་བཏངས།།  
³ཆར་ཟེལ་མ་འབབ་གི་རྟེན་འབྲེལ་རེད།།  
⁴འདི་ཤེར་སྟུང་སྟགས་པའི་བཀའ་བྲིན་ཡིན།།

Ser srung /

¹Dgung a sngon dbyings la 'ja' gsum shar//  
²Sprin shar ma gnyis kyi gdan zig (zhig) btangs//  
³Char zil ma 'bab gi (pa'i) rten 'brel red//  
⁴'di ser srung sngags pa'i bka' drin yin//

*Ser srung*:

- <sup>1</sup>Three rainbows have appeared in the blue sky,  
<sup>2</sup>Two long clouds are laid out as felt.  
<sup>3</sup>An auspicious sign of the coming of light rain,  
<sup>4</sup>It's the benevolence of the tantric *ser srung*.

### Song Three

ཞིང་བ།  
<sup>1</sup>སྤྲོམ་ཆེ་གི་ལྷ་སྤྱིན་སྤེ་བརྒྱད་དེས།  
<sup>2</sup>སྤྱིན་ནག་པོ་དགྲུང་ནས་དུག་ཏུ་སྒྱུ།  
<sup>3</sup>ཡིད་ལྷ་མོ་མཚན་མེད་སྤྲུང་བྱུང་།  
<sup>4</sup>མཐུ་ལྷས་པ་ཡིད་མེད་སྤྱི་གིས་ཤེས།

Zhing ba/

- <sup>1</sup>Stobs che gi (ba'i) lha srin sde brgyad des//  
<sup>2</sup>Sprin nag po dgung nas dkrug dus su//  
<sup>3</sup>Phying zhwa mo gon gi (pa'i) ser srung khyod//  
<sup>4</sup>Mthu nus pa yod med su gis (yis) shes//

Farmer:

- <sup>1</sup>The powerful eight classes of deities and spirits,  
<sup>2</sup>As they stir up dark clouds in the sky.  
<sup>3</sup>You, the *ser srung* who is capped by a felt hat,  
<sup>4</sup>Who knows if you truly embody such powerful force?

### Song Four

མེར་སྤྲུང་།  
<sup>1</sup>སྤྲུང་མེར་བ་བཞིན་དུ་དགྲུང་ནས་ཤོག།  
<sup>2</sup>ང་མེར་སྤྲུང་སྤྲུགས་པ་ས་ནས་འདུག།  
<sup>3</sup>སྤྱིན་དུམ་བུ་གསུམ་གི་མ་བཏང་ན།  
<sup>4</sup>ང་མེར་སྤྲུང་སྤྲུགས་པ་མིན་པའི་རྟགས།

Ser srung /

- <sup>1</sup>Khyod ser ba bzhin du dgung nas shog/  
<sup>2</sup>Nga ser srung sngags pa sa nas 'dug/



<sup>3</sup>Sprin dum bu gsum gi (du) ma btang (bgos) na//  
<sup>4</sup>Nga ser srung sngags pa min pa'i rtags//

*Ser srung:*

<sup>1</sup>You come like hailstones from the sky,  
<sup>2</sup>I, the *ser srung*, will stay on the earth.  
<sup>3</sup>If I fail to split the clouds into three,  
<sup>4</sup>It's proof that I, the *ser srung*, am not a *tāntrika*.

Song Five

ཞིང་བ།  
<sup>1</sup>ཞིང་རི་མ་སེར་ར་ཡོང་དུས་གི།  
<sup>2</sup>གནམ་བུ་ཡུག་སྐྱུ་མོ་དུལ་ལ་བསྐྱོད།  
<sup>3</sup>ས་སྐྱུང་ནག་རྩོག་སེར་བ་འཁྲིབས།  
<sup>4</sup>གྲོང་སེར་སྐྱུང་རིག་ན་སྤྱིང་རེ་རྒྱེ།

Zhing ba/

<sup>1</sup>Zhing ri ma ser ra (ba) yong dus gi (su)//  
<sup>2</sup>Gnam bu yug skya mo rdul la bskyod//  
<sup>3</sup>Sa mun nag rdo gi (yi) ser ba 'thibs//  
<sup>4</sup>Grong ser srung rig na snying re rje//

Farmer:

<sup>1</sup>When hail comes to the arid mountain fields,  
<sup>2</sup>The stormy sky is gorged with grey dust.  
<sup>3</sup>The gloomy earth is shrouded by hailstones,  
<sup>4</sup>It's then pathetic to see the village *ser srung*.

Song Six

སེར་སྐྱུང་།  
<sup>1</sup>དགུང་སྤྱི་བརྒྱད་སེར་བ་མ་དག་ན།  
<sup>2</sup>ང་སྐྱགས་པས་སེར་རྩེ་ལུ་འཕམ་དོན་མེད།  
<sup>3</sup>ཁྱོད་སྤྱི་བརྒྱད་འཕུལ་གྱི་མཚོན་ཆ་གན།  
<sup>4</sup>གཙོག་འདྲིང་ན་གསང་སྐྱགས་བརྒྱས་བརྩོད་ཡོད།

Ser srung /

<sup>1</sup>Dgung sde brgyad ser ba ma drag na//

<sup>2</sup>Nga sngags pas ser rde'u 'phen don med//

<sup>3</sup>Khyod sde brgyad 'phrul gyi mtshon cha gan//

<sup>4</sup>Gcog 'dod na gsang sngags bzlas brjod yod//

*Ser srung:*

<sup>1</sup>If the hailstorms of the eight classes of deities and spirits are too strong,

<sup>2</sup>There's no point for me, the t̃antrika, to throw the *ser rde'u*.

<sup>3</sup>The magic weapon of you, the eight classes of deities and spirits,

<sup>4</sup>I can wreak destruction by reciting secret mantras if I want to.

### Song Seven

ཞིང་བ།  
<sup>1</sup>སྒྲིན་ནག་པོ་བང་རིམ་སྐུམ་རྩེག་ཡོད།  
<sup>2</sup>བང་གོང་མའི་ནང་ན་སྒྲིབ་བྱུང་ཡོད།  
<sup>3</sup>བང་བར་མའི་ནང་ན་འབྲུག་རྒྱུད་ཡོད།  
<sup>4</sup>བང་ཞོལ་མའི་ནང་ན་སེར་ར་ཡོད།  
<sup>5</sup>རྒྱུད་སྒྲིབ་སེར་ཆར་གྱི་བསྐྱུ་མ་ཡིན།

Zhing ba/

<sup>1</sup>Sprin nag po bang rim sum rtseg yod//

<sup>2</sup>Bang gong ma'i nang na sde brgyad yod//

<sup>3</sup>Bang bar ma'i nang na 'brug chung yod//

<sup>4</sup>Bang zhol ma'i nang na ser ra (ba) yod//

<sup>5</sup>Rlung skyi bser char gi (gyi) bsu ma yin//

Farmer:

<sup>1</sup>The dark clouds have three layers.

<sup>2</sup>In the upper layer are the eight classes of deities and spirits.

<sup>3</sup>In the mid-layer are small dragons.

<sup>4</sup>In the lower layer are hailstones.

<sup>5</sup>A gentle breeze is a welcome sign of rain.

## Song Eight

སེར་སྤྱང་།  
<sup>1</sup>ང་སེར་སྤྱང་སྤང་ན་ཡོད་ཡོད་ལ།  
<sup>2</sup>འབྲུག་པོ་ཆུང་གན་གི་ངར་ར་རྩོས།  
<sup>3</sup>ང་སེར་སྤྱང་སྤང་ན་མེད་ཀྱི་ན།  
<sup>4</sup>ཤིང་ཅི་རྩིས་ཆང་མ་རྒྱུ་ཅིས་རེད།  
<sup>5</sup>ཞིང་རི་ཞིས་ཆ་ཅིག་འབྲུར་ཅིས་རེད།

Ser srung /

<sup>1</sup>Nga ser srung sgang na yod yod la//  
<sup>2</sup>'brug pho chung gan gi (gyi) ngar ra (la) ltos//  
<sup>3</sup>Nga ser srung sgang na med kyi na//  
<sup>4</sup>Shing rtsi tog tshang ma rdung rtsis red//  
<sup>5</sup>Zhing ri zhis cha tsig ('ga' zhig) 'khur rtsis red//

*Ser srung:*

<sup>1</sup>Despite I, the *ser srung*, being atop the peak,  
<sup>2</sup>Just observe how vigorous the small dragon is.  
<sup>3</sup>If I, the *ser srung*, were not atop the peak,  
<sup>4</sup>All the trees and plants would be fated for destruction,  
<sup>5</sup>Several fields would be fated to be flooded.<sup>27</sup>

Villagers observed certain taboos while crops were growing to prevent hail from destroying crops. They did not herd cattle into fields or cut grass near fields. Villagers sometimes burned a few barley stalks in a field and ate the scorched grain as a snack while working, but did not leave burned stalks in the fields. Women did not go to fields without having recently washed their faces or hair and their hair had to be tied up. Women were also forbidden to pollute spring water by, for example, touching it with their hands when fetching water.

<sup>27</sup> These folk songs were provided by Rgya kar (b. 1949).

## WEATHER FORECASTING

According to *Preventing Hail*, *ser srung* forecast hail using dreams and by observing the sky, clouds, earth, lightning, the sound of thunder, and the location of falling sunbeams. Each is detailed below. Before a *ser srung* slept each night, he chanted a mantra 108 times, blew on water he poured into his hand, and drank it. This ritual imbued his dreams with prophetic power. In the list below, the first item indicates what might have appeared in the *ser srung*'s dream and the item following the arrow indicates what it signified:

- pigs, snakes, goats, or sheep eating crops → *nāga* will destroy crops with hail
- yaks eating crops → *bdud*<sup>28</sup> will destroy crops with hail
- horses eating crops → *btsan*<sup>29</sup> will destroy crops with hail
- insects eating crops → *gnod sbyin*<sup>30</sup> will destroy crops with hail
- women roasting grain → *ma mo*<sup>31</sup> will destroy crops with hail
- many gray people in the fields → *rgyal po*<sup>32</sup> will destroy crops with hail.
- snow covering the crops → *lha*<sup>33</sup> will destroy the crops with hail
- a *ser tho* → all eight classes of deities and spirits will destroy the crops with hail

The appearance of clouds, rainbows, and mountains are also indicators of hail, as shown in the list below:

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<sup>28</sup> A type of demon.

<sup>29</sup> A type of demon.

<sup>30</sup> A class of powerful guardian spirits that can both help and harm.

<sup>31</sup> A malevolent female spirit belonging to the eight classes of gods and spirits.

<sup>32</sup> *Rgyal po* spirits are 'king' spirits who manifest through anger.

<sup>33</sup> Worldly deities.

- red, black, or yellow clouds in the east → *btsan* will send hail
- three clouds resembling *kha btags*<sup>34</sup> → *mtsho sman*<sup>35</sup> will send hail
- three dark brown clouds in the south resembling *sa bdag*<sup>36</sup> → *bdud* will send hail
- clouds resembling armor in the west → *ma mo* will send hail
- a cloud resembling a sitting monkey in the north → *dkor bdag*<sup>37</sup> will send hail
- a red and blue cloud resembling a writhing snake → *klu* will send hail
- a cloud resembling a flaming torch → *the'u rang*<sup>38</sup> will send hail
- clouds resembling a monkey, yak, palm of the hand, or a black rag → hail will fall
- a rainbow or fast-moving clouds, despite a lack of wind in the western sky → hail will fall
- clouds like a brick wall in the south or west → hail will fall
- clouds from the east → it will be very difficult to prevent hail from falling
- clouds moving from west and north → hail will fall
- A ye Klu sman is surrounded by fog or clouds → the deity is wearing her hat and hail will soon fall

Lightning may also signal that hail will fall, as indicated by the following observed phenomena:

- distant lightning
- lightning clouds that thicken and gather

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<sup>34</sup> Silk scarves.

<sup>35</sup> A class of feminine spirits.

<sup>36</sup> Demons who dominate the soil and habitats connected with the earth.

<sup>37</sup> Owner of property, spirit who is custodian of images, for example, *Pe har rgyal po*.

<sup>38</sup> *The'u rang* is a white, multicolored, or black evil spirit that is often said to have only one leg or resemble a cat.

- lightning clouds that resemble running horses
- lightning may be red or pink, and red lightning accompanied by thunder, but without rain, portends hail if it continues for more than an hour

The location of sunbeams may also signal that hail will fall. The clouds are drinking water and hail will subsequently fall when sunbeams fall on the Yellow River.

Hail that falls in the morning is more disastrous than hail falling at night.

#### HAIL PREVENTION

A *ser srung* might have prevented hail for a country, a *phyogs khag*,<sup>39</sup> a hamlet, or even a family or clan.

All hail prevention rituals were held in the Skya nag Hill tantric hall. After donning his *chu phying*, the *ser srung* took his 'ur cha, *ser rde'u*, *rwa dung*, and box constructed of miniature daggers, to the roof of the tantric hall. After offering *bsang*, the *ser srung* blew the *rwa dung*.

*Preventing Hail* includes three methods for preventing hail – peaceful, neither peaceful nor forceful, and forceful methods. According to the peaceful method, the *ser srung* prepared tea, butter, liquor, *gser skyems*,<sup>40</sup> *mchod pa*, and *gtor ma* when thick, dark clouds formed and approached Skya rgya. These were offered to the eight classes of deities and spirits. He then prayed, imagining himself to be a very kind, compassionate person comparable to Shakyamuni Buddha, spoke kindly to the eight classes of deities and spirits, beseeching them not to destroy crops, and chanted:

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<sup>39</sup> A *phyogs khag* 'village confederation' consists of several hamlets.

<sup>40</sup> *Gser skyems* or 'golden drink' is an honorific word for 'pure' drinks, such as water, that are offered to protective deities.

[illegible]<sup>1</sup>Kye/

<sup>2</sup>Dregs pa lha srin mthu bo che//

<sup>3</sup>Thog 'brug glog gi zil dang bcos//

<sup>4</sup>jigs rung sku yi drag shul can//

<sup>5</sup>Drag po'i dpung gi che bstod du//

<sup>6</sup>Bdud rtsi gser skyems mchod pa 'bul//

<sup>7</sup>Bar snang kham s la dbang bsgyur bas//

<sup>8</sup>Byon pa'i shul lam gar yang bde//

9'di na gnas pa'i nyams chung rnams//

<sup>10</sup>Glog gis sngangs shing 'brug gis skrags//

<sup>11</sup>Thog gis shin tu 'jigs lags shing //

<sup>12</sup>Drag po'i sku srid bzod dka' bas//

<sup>13</sup>Gser skyems mchod pa 'di bzhes la//

<sup>14</sup>Drag shul chen po'i dpung gi lam//

- <sup>15</sup>'di ru ma btod gzhan du bsgyur//  
<sup>16</sup>Thog ser lam sna dgra la gtod//  
<sup>17</sup>'di na gnas pa'i skye bo rnams//  
<sup>18</sup>Phyag na rdo rje'i skyabs song yin//  
<sup>19</sup>O rgyan pad+ma'i bka' 'bangs yin//  
<sup>20</sup>jig rten dregs pa'i mchod sde yin//  
<sup>21</sup>Dgongs shing byams par mdzad nas kyang //  
<sup>22</sup>Gdug pa'i cho 'phrul zhi bar mdzod//

<sup>1</sup>Kye<sup>41</sup>

- <sup>2</sup>Alas, haughty deities and spirits of great might,  
<sup>3</sup>With intimidating thunder and lightning,  
<sup>4</sup>(You) possess ferocious appearances.  
<sup>5</sup>In honor of the mighty ones,  
<sup>6</sup>Ambrosial *gser skyems* is offered,  
<sup>7</sup>Controlling the world of space,  
<sup>8</sup>All the trails (you) pass on remain safe.  
<sup>9</sup>The weak and helpless beings residing here are,  
<sup>10</sup>Threatened and petrified by thunder and lightning,  
<sup>11</sup>And even more terrified by thunderbolts,  
<sup>12</sup>The impact of the mighty ones is thus unendurable.  
<sup>13</sup>While enjoying the libations of *gser skyems*  
<sup>14</sup>Mighty ones! Do not make your way around here,  
<sup>15</sup>Make your way towards a place in another direction,  
<sup>16</sup>And target thunderbolts and hailstorms at your adversaries.  
<sup>17</sup>People residing in this place are,  
<sup>18</sup>Refugees of the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi,  
<sup>19</sup>Followers of Padmasambhava of Uḍḍiyāna.  
<sup>20</sup>(This is) a place where offerings are made to supernatural forces,  
<sup>21</sup>Taking this into consideration with benevolence,  
<sup>22</sup>Please eliminate malicious magical forces.

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<sup>41</sup> A vocable.



He then silently chanted the mantra of the deity Rten 'brel snying bo while looking at the clouds and clapping his hands towards them.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>1</sup>སྐྱུ་རྒྱུ་འི་ཡུལ་ཕྱོགས་འདི་ལ་སེར་བའི་གཞོན་པ་བཅས་ཅད་བརློག་པར་གྱུར་ཅིག  
<sup>2</sup>མད་པར་གྱུར་ཅིག  
<sup>3</sup>ཞི་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག  
<sup>4</sup>རབ་ཏུ་ཞི་བར་གྱུར་ཅིག

<sup>1</sup>Skya rgya'i yul phyogs 'di la ser ba'i gnod pa thams cad bzlog par gyur cig

<sup>2</sup>Med par gyur cig

<sup>3</sup>Zhi bar gyur cig

<sup>4</sup>Rab tu zhi bar gyur cig

<sup>1</sup>May the damage of hail in the land of Skya rgya be blocked,

<sup>2</sup>May it become non-existent,

<sup>3</sup>May it become dissipated,

<sup>4</sup>May it become completely cleared.

If this attempt proved unsuccessful, the *ser srung* employed the second method, which was neither peaceful nor forceful. He prayed to and meditated on the deity Rta mgrin, visualizing himself as the deity. He also visualized that one of the ten wrathful ones was becoming angry and that fire was burning around the *ser tho* and spreading outwards until the black clouds were burned into white silk<sup>43</sup> and then left. While doing this, he pointed<sup>44</sup> at the clouds and clapped his hands towards them. He chanted Rta mgrin's mantra to destroy the clouds and hail:

<sup>42</sup> This was traditionally a method of expelling evil.

<sup>43</sup> White clouds.

<sup>44</sup> Pointing is traditionally considered rude and aggressive.

<sup>1</sup>ཨྀ་ཏི་ས་ར་ཁུམ་ཕཎ  
<sup>2</sup>ན་ག་ཤ་ན་ག་ཐེད་ཐེད  
<sup>3</sup>ཧྱི་མ་ར་ཡ་ནན་སྣ་ཏྲ

<sup>1</sup>oM ti sa ra hUM phaT  
<sup>2</sup>na ga sha na ga thed thed  
<sup>3</sup>hri ma ra ya nan swA hA

If thick, dark clouds increased, he visualized a wrathful form of Rta mgrin and imagined a great wind blowing from his *sdigs mdzub*,<sup>45</sup> repelling the dark clouds to a distant mountain peak or into the Yellow River. He then chanted the following while blowing at the dark clouds:

<sup>1</sup>ཨྀ་ལྷ་ར་ལྷ་ར་།  
<sup>2</sup>ཆེ་ར་ཆེ་ར་།  
<sup>3</sup>རྩུ་ར་རྩུ་ར་།  
<sup>4</sup>ཤག་ཤག་།  
<sup>5</sup>ཐུན་ཐུན་།  
<sup>6</sup>བད་བད་།

<sup>1</sup>oM lhang lhang  
<sup>2</sup>tsher tsher  
<sup>3</sup>hur hur  
<sup>4</sup>shag shag  
<sup>5</sup>thun thun  
<sup>6</sup>rbad rbad

If clouds continued to gather, the *ser srung* used the forceful method. He burned *dug rdzas* to make smoke and harm the eight classes of deities and spirits, thus forcing them to stop. If he was still unable to defeat them and hail began falling, he tossed poison into the clouds and used his *'ur cha* to fire *ser rde'u* at the clouds while

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<sup>45</sup> A threatening tantric posture of the hand.

chanting Rta mgrin's mantra. He meanwhile visualized himself as the most wrathful form of Rta mgrin and visualized small daggers shooting into the dark hail clouds, where the eight classes of deities and spirits were either killed or fled. Meanwhile, if the *ser srung*'s lay friends were present they might have shouted loudly to assist him, shot flaming arrows, fired guns at the clouds, or beat drums.

*Ser srung* had another method of hail prevention when hail approached. Since hail is caused by the eight classes of deities and spirits, *ser srung* divined to learn where they were on a given day, within the eight directions (north, east, west, south, southeast, southwest, northwest, and northeast). Once located, he set up a *ser tho* facing the eight classes of deities and spirits in that section of village territory. He might also have set ten *ser tho* in village fields representing the ten wrathful ones. Eight were for the eight directions, and one *ser tho* was constructed to guard against deities in the upper realm, while another guarded against deities in the lower realm. He meanwhile chanted a wrathful mantra to increase the power of all the *ser tho*. In his left hand he held a frog whose mouth faced the direction of the dark hail clouds and in his right hand he twirled his 'ur cha. If this was unsuccessful and hail fell, he put *ser rde'u* in the sling and shot them towards the dark clouds, and might also have blown his *rwa dung*. He might also have put a flat stone on the ground – a stone taken from the Skya rgya sky burial site, or from a riverbank and left in the sky burial site for days, weeks, months, or even years.

Another method used to prevent hail was to visualize Rta mgrin again and imagine each hailstone as an arrow, the wind as a bow, and clouds as a black tent. The *ser srung* then chanted scriptures and mantras to imagine he had destroyed the arrows, bow, and tent.

The last hail-prevention method involved constructing a female effigy from red clay and painting it black. An arrow,

arrowhead of *skyer ba*, and a bow of *tsher ma*<sup>46</sup> were made. The arrowhead was a triangular-based pyramid painted with blood mixed with poison. The arrow feather was from a *khwa ta* 'jackdaw' and the bowstring was threaded from widows' hair in a counterclockwise direction. This effigy was placed with the bow and arrow placed in its hands in the field where it often hailed, so that it appeared to be shooting an arrow in the direction hail usually came. A mantra written on a paper was placed in the arrow notch. The *ser srung* chanted tantra and mantra to empower these items.

Powerful *ser srung* did not need to undertake such complex rituals because they could stop hail with the power of their mantra alone. Furthermore, the *chu phying*, 'ur cha, *ser rde'u*, and *ser 'khor* taken from Sakya Pandita's family are thought to have great intrinsic power. If the *ser srung* was busy, he might have left these items onto the roof of the tantric house on Skya nag Hill, and the power of these implements alone would stop hail, even though the *ser srung* was not present.

## PAYMENT

Every Skya rgya household paid *ser srung* in barley and grain until the time of Bsam gtan rgya mtsho. Often two of the *ser srung*'s family members visited each Skya rgya household at harvest time with a sack and wooden basin loaded on a mule and filled the basin with barley. If villagers heard that the family was collecting *ser 'bru* at a certain household, they brought barley there. Collectors also sometimes came to the *ma Ni khang* where all villagers gathered to pay *ser 'bru*, which was often collected for more than a month. Households that owned no farmland and worked for other families did not pay *ser 'bru*. There were more than 200 households in Skya rgya during Bla ma tshe ring's period, thus about 200 basins of barley were collected annually for *ser srung*.

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<sup>46</sup> *Tsher ma* is a general term for thorns and thorny plants.

This changed during Bsam gtan rgya mtsho's lifetime, when each hamlet leader began to collect *ser 'bru* and give it to the *ser srung*. Some hamlets gave less *ser 'bru* to *ser srung* than before. Later, some villagers stopped giving *ser 'bru*, primarily because Bsam gtan rgya mtsho lacked *gdams pa'i rgyud pa* and was thus not recognized as a true *ser srung*.

## CONCLUSION

Hail prevention rituals and the role of *ser srung* have an extended history in Skya rgya, as indicated by Ser tho Hill where *ser tho* were built and hail prevention rituals held. *Ser srung* in Skya rgya may be directly traced to Sakya Pandita's family. In 2011, local elders remained convinced of the power of *ser srung* and their ability to prevent hail from devastating crops. However, after 1958, dramatic changes in Skya rgya and other Tibetan areas drastically altered people's lives and beliefs, and resulted in the disappearance of such rituals as hail prevention.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

'Jam dbyangs dpang phyug འཇམ་དབྱངས་དཔང་ཕྱུག  
'Jigs byed འཇིགས་བྱེད།  
'ur cha ལུ་ཅ།

A

A 'byung ཨ་འབྱུང།  
A ye Klu sman ཨ་ཡེ་ཀུ་སྐྱམས།  
A myes Brag dkar ཨ་མྱེས་བྲག་དཀར།  
A myes Srin po ཨ་མྱེས་སྤོན་པོ།

B

Bar rtsig བར་རྩི  
bdud བདུད།  
Bka' gyur བཀ་འགྱུར།  
bla ma བླ་མ།  
Bla ma tshe ring བླ་མ་ཚེ་རིང་།  
Bsam gtan rgya mtsho བསམ་གཏན་རྒྱ་མཚོ།  
bsang བསང་།  
bsnyen pa བསྟེན་པ།  
Bstan 'gyur བསྟན་འགྱུར།  
btsan བཅན།  
Bya rgyal khyung བྱ་རྒྱལ་མྱུང་།

C

Chos dar ཚོས་དར།  
Chos 'khor ཚོས་འཁོར།  
Chos 'khur ཚོས་འཁུར།  
chu phying རྩུ་ཕྱིང་།

D

Da ru ཌ་རུ།  
Dbyar ston དབྱར་སྟོན།  
dkor bdag དཀོར་བདག་  
dril bu འིལ་བུ།  
Do rgya ཌོ་རྒྱ།  
dug rdzas དུག་རྩ་ས།

G

*Ga'u* གཤུ།  
*Gcan tsha* གཅན་ཚ།  
*gdams pa* གདམས་པ།  
*gdams pa'i rgyud pa* གདམས་པའི་རྒྱུད་པ།  
*Gdugs dkar* གདུགས་དཀར།  
*Gle ring* གླེ་རིང་།  
*Gle zhol* གླེ་ཞོ།  
*Gnam steng* གནམ་སྟེང་།  
*gnod sbyin* གནོད་སྦྱིན།  
*Gsang bdag* གསང་བདག་།  
*Gsang sgrog* གསང་སྟོག་།  
*gser skyems* གཤེར་སྦྱེམས།  
*gtor ma* གཏོར་མ།  
*Guinan* 贵南  
*gzhi bdag* གཞི་བདག་།

H

*Henan* 河南  
*Huangnan* 黄南

J

*Jiajia* 贾加  
*Jianzha* 尖扎

K

*kha btags* ཁ་བརྟགས།  
*Kha smad* ཁ་སྦྱང།  
*Kha stod* ཁ་སྟོད།  
*khro bo bcu* ཁྲོ་བོ་བཅུ།  
*khwa ta* ཁྲ་ཏ།  
*Khyung* རྒྱུང་།  
*klu* ལུ།

L

*lab tse* ལཔ་ཙེ།  
*Lcang skya rol pa'i rdo rje* ལུང་སྐུ་རོལ་པའི་རོ་རྟེ།  
*Lha ri* ལྷ་རི།

*lha sde* ལྷ་སྡེ།  
*lha srin sde brgyad* ལྷ་སྲིན་སྡེ་བརྒྱད། M

*ma mo* མ་མོ།  
 Ma nang a lags མ་ནང་ཨ་ལགས།  
 Ma ri tsi མ་རི་ཙི།  
 Mang ra མང་ར།  
*mchod pa* མཚོད་པ།  
 Mgon po brag nag མགོན་པོ་བླ་མ་ནག  
*mnan pa* མནན་པ།  
 Mo gzu མོ་གཟུ།  
*mtsho sman* མཚོ་སྐྱོན།  
 Mtsho sngon མཚོ་སྒོན།

O  
 oM ma ni pad me h+UM ཨོཾ་མ་ནི་པད་མེ་ཏཱྃ།  
 P

Pha gzhi ཕ་གཞི།  
*phyogs khag* ཕྱགས་ཁག Q

Qinghai 青海 R

*ra dung* ར་དུང་།  
*rdo rje* རོ་རྗེ།  
*rdzongs pa* རྫོངས་པ།  
 Rgya kar རྒྱ་ར།  
 Rgyal stong ba རྒྱལ་སྟོང་བ།  
 Rin chen chos gling རིན་ཆེན་ཆོས་གླིང་།  
*rlung rta* རླུང་རྟ།  
 Rma lho ར་ལྷོ།  
 Rog ma རོག་མ།  
 Rta mgrin ར་མགྲིན།  
 Rta mgrin gsang sgrub kyi sgo nas ser ba srung ba'i gdam pa me long  
 'khrug pa'i gur khang ར་མགྲིན་གསང་སྐྱུ་བ་བྱིསོ་ནས་མེར་བ་སྐྱུང་བའི་གདམ་པ་མེ་མོང་  
 འཁྲུག་པའི་གུར་ཁང་།



*rtags* རྟགས།  
*rtsam pa* རྩམ་པ།

S

*sa bdag* ས་བདག།  
*Sa pan* ས་པན།  
*Sakya Pandita* ས་སྐྱ་པཎ্ডིཏ།  
*ser 'bru* ཤེར་འབྲུ།  
*ser 'khor* ཤེར་འཁོར།  
*ser rde'u* ཤེར་རྟེན།  
*ser srung* ཤེར་སྤྱང་།  
*ser tho* ཤེར་ཐོ།  
*sgrub pa* སྐྱབ་པ།  
*Shag kya* ཤག་ཀྱ།  
*Shing lu'u* ཤིང་ལུ་འུ།  
*Ska phug* སྐ་ཕུག།  
*Skya nag* སྐྱ་ནག།  
*Skya rgya* སྐྱ་རྒྱ།  
*skyer ba* སྐྱེར་བ།  
*sngags pa* སྔགས་པ།  
*srung ma* སྤྱང་མ།

T

*thang ka* ཐང་ཀ།  
*the'u rang* ཐེ་འུ་རང་།  
*tsher ma* ཐེར་མ།

Y

*Yang gle* ཡང་གླེ།